

HOMELESS GRANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HGAP) 2008 PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

King County Housing Foundations Project

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CONTEXT

The King County Housing Foundations project was conceived and developed by the Prevention Task Force of the Committee to End Homelessness King County (CEHKC). CEHKC is the collaborative group that was created to implement the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness, which was introduced in March 2005. CEHKC is made up of representatives from business, faith, social services, government, homeless and formerly homeless people, and advocacy groups, and organized into a Governing Board, Interagency Council, and Consumer Advisory Council. This structure was finalized and the three bodies of CEHKC began to meet monthly in July 2005.

King County was awarded prior HGAP funding in the December 2006 and December 2007 funding rounds.* The 2006 HGAP award funded the creation of Supportive Housing Intervention for Transition to Stability (SHIFTS), a program focused on adding a housing dimension to existing county programs that address high utilizers of jail and mental health services. The 2007 award funded Double Effectiveness in Ending Chronic Homelessness, which included both graduation housing for formerly homeless people ready to move on to less service-intensive units, and the expansion of a housing first pilot program in suburban South King County.

PROJECT HISTORY

CEHKC members and their partners observed that many people in King County who became homeless had waited too long to seek assistance that might have helped them to maintain their housing. The King County Ten Year Plan recognized the need to include homelessness prevention services as one of its priority areas. Prevention assistance was being provided through the King County Housing Stability Project, the City of Seattle and some other suburban cities. However, CEHKC members wanted to approach this work more comprehensively, and to develop strategies to tie together activities across the County to identify people at risk of homelessness earlier. King

* Note: for more information on King County's prior HGAP projects, please see the 2006 and 2007 Project History documents, available on the HGAP website:
<http://www.cted.wa.gov/site/1036/default.aspx>.

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County sought to reduce the use of more expensive re-housing services or incurred shelter costs by providing assistance “upstream” before people lose their housing.

In 2007, CEHKC convened a Prevention Task Force to develop recommendations to improve “the provision of emergency assistance and interventions designed to directly prevent individuals, families and youth from becoming homeless.” Prevention activities being considered included emergency rent/mortgage assistance, utility assistance, emergency financial assistance, case management, and links to job training and placement. This project did not consider discharge planning, which was addressed by other CEHKC-backed initiatives and committees.

With assistance from contracted consultants, the Task Force conducted research into prevention best practices, the effectiveness of and gaps in existing local services, and the cost-effectiveness of prevention activities. The Task Force designed the Housing Foundations project as part of a series of recommendations for the County to improve the prevention “system.”

One of the key challenges to creating a cost-effective prevention program is accurately identifying the population that would otherwise become homeless. Because no single risk indicator can definitively predict whether a household will become homeless, the Task Force included a plan to integrate an assessment tool into the Housing Foundations project to help better identify conditions in a household that put that household at risk of losing their housing. The budget for the number of people who could be served was based on the types of prevention services currently available through various local programs, as well as the outreach and connector services provided by prevention program models in New York and Hennepin County (MN).

The Task Force followed the example of New York City’s HomeBase program by planning for Housing Foundations to serve a specific geographic area with a high proportion of people who seek assistance. The project included evaluating the impact of services on household stability and effectiveness in preventing loss of housing.

CEHKC approved the program recommendation and applied for HGAP funding in the spring 2008 round, and was successfully awarded a portion of requested funding in June 2008 for the Housing Foundations project.

CURRENT ACTIVITY

The Housing & Community Development Division (HCD) of the King County Department of Community and Human Services executed a contract with CTED in October 2008. Similar to the County’s Housing Stability Program (HSP), the project structure will be composed of a lead administering agency, Solid Ground, to oversee

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the implementation of the project and subcontract with agencies to provide direct services to clients in the pilot areas. Part of the intent of Housing Foundations was to intervene at an earlier point, before a client's situation has reached a point where loss of housing is imminent. HCD will use information and experience serving HSP clients to inform and help target services among the new households served by HFP.

HCD released a request for proposals (RFP) for a consultant to design the project evaluation, which closed in February. The consultant will complete the evaluation planning phase in July 2009, and the implementation will be executed by HCD staff.

HCD has collected information to inform the selection of the program sites, and is working to adapt the pilot design to partial funding, but will seek to secure other funding to continue services after HGAP funds have ended.

Once under contract, Solid Ground will hire staff to implement and administer the project: finalizing client services and pilot outreach plans, subcontracting with provider agencies in pilot areas, assisting in the evaluation design, and creating the client assessment tool.

PROJECT TIMELINE

2005	State Homeless housing and Assistance Act (2163) passed
March 2005	King County Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness introduced
July 2005	CEHKC begins monthly meetings
January 2008	HGAP releases 2008 HGAP RFP
April 2008	King County submits Housing Foundations HGAP application
June 2008	CTED announces conditional funding of \$833,333 for King County Housing Foundations Project
October 2008	HCD executes contract with CTED
January 2009	HCD releases RFP for project evaluation planning